

RECENSIONES / BOOK REVIEWS / RECENZJE

PRESENTATION OF THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BIOETHICS

Encyklopedia Bioetyki, Andrzej Muszala (ed.), Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, Radom 2005, pp. 552.

At present we face a situation where knowledge is being enhanced very rapidly within highly specialised fields. It concerns as scientific knowledge as any other kind of humanistic reflection. Therefore, there is no wonder that that process is perceived ambiguously. *Prima facie* reaction is to give a positive even a spontaneous welcome to it. It is obvious that more developed knowledge triggers a technology and finally a better level of human existence. In one way or another, it is a fulfilment of ever-lasting human expectations. But on the other hand, we must face a couple of problems too. First of all, such developed knowledge often causes a kind of methodological muddle. From the point of view of an average, even well educated, man, it gives an impression of being lost. Very specialist accounts of different aspects of human life create a feeling of being flooded with a great deal of often conflicting information for the listener. It is understandable that there are only a few people having simultaneously a deeper insight into more than one specialist reservoir of knowledge having a direct influence on the life of modern man. What we have to accept is the fact that a lot of information is just beyond us.

Secondly, the fact that we are unable to have a proper reception of that is coupled with awareness that gaining knowledge itself is not enough. In many areas of scientific and humanistic investigation a lot of moral dilemmas arise as well. Therefore, we cannot only concentrate on the facet of pure information. It is particularly vivid in the realm of life-sciences, biotechnology, genetic engineering, and all other fields which are being embraced by bioethics. The proper development of knowledge in these areas must include a set of adequate moral and ethical considerations. Without ethics bio-medical sciences and technologies can easily become an all-purpose tool leading to manipulation, segregation and even to actions against the good of human life altogether.

The task of collecting and ordering such a wide spectrum of scientific, humanistic and moral issues is usually undertaken by all sorts of lexicons and encyclopaedias. They endeavour to give a brief description of both scientific data and humanistic and moral considerations. Therefore, a factual presentation is

necessarily associated with different proposals of moral assessments. Moreover, many such compendia embark on the task of pointing to the one stance which seems to be the most appropriate, as far as morality is concerned.

The phenomenon of coming out of encyclopaedias of bioethics is widely known as in America as in Europe. It is enough to point to several examples. The foremost example is the five-volume American 3rd edition of *The Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, where Steven G. Post is an Editor in Chief (Thomson & Gale, New York 2003). It is a continuation of the seminal work by Warren T. Reich (1st edition 1978, 2nd edition 1995). Also in the area of European bioethics, we can notice a couple of remarkable achievements. It is worth noting such compendia as: a French-Belgian *La Nouvelle Encyclopédie de Bioéthique* edited under supervision of G. Hottois (2nd edition 2001); Italian ones: *Dizionario di Bioetica* edited by S. Leone and S. Privitera (2nd edition 2004) and *Enciclopedia di Bioetica e Sessuologia*, edited by G. Russo (1st edition 2004); and a German *Lexikon der Bioetik* edited by W. Korff, L. Beck, P. Mikat (1st edition 1998).

In Poland there has been no similar work thus far. And the lack of such encyclopaedia has been painfully felt especially in the Catholic environment. The team of scholars of the Interfaculty Institute of Bioethics, operating within the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow, decided to fill this gap. Therefore, under the guidance of Rev. Andrzej Muszala, S.T.D., the team embarked on the process of setting up such a compendium.

The first set of problems which must have been sorted out concerned a character of an encyclopaedia, an audience at whom it would be addressed, an extent of topics, a quality and number of authors who were to be invited to participate, and so on.

First of all, it has been obvious since the moment when such an idea dawned on the team that *the Encyclopaedia* should mirror a Christian (Roman Catholic) approach to bioethical matters. That is, all entries containing the moral weight should be analysed against the background of the personalistic philosophy and the moral teaching of the Catholic Church. It has been a conviction stemming from the very intellectual tradition of the Institute. Secondly, because of the pioneer character of this enterprise in Poland, the team decided to take up the main topics of bioethical debates. It went without saying that the first approach to such an enterprise must deal with the substantial matters. Finally, the problem which arose referred to the specific Polish character of *the Encyclopaedia*. The intention of the editor was not to make a copy or a sheer translation of the one of yet existing encyclopaedias. It has been important all along to produce a work which is fitting to the Polish cultural and social context (e.g. something which includes the Polish bioethical debates and the Polish law concerning bioethical issues).

The team invited all bioethicists operating at the Catholic Faculties, Universities and Academies in Poland. The aim was to draw upon the works of already operating bioethicists and to consolidate the Catholic bioethical environment. In fact, in Poland there are many outstanding bioethicists working at universities in Lublin, Warsaw, Olsztyn, Opole, Wrocław, Poznan, Cracow. They work either at state-run universities (at Faculties of Catholic Theology) or at Church-run uni-

versities, academies or theological faculties (at both Faculties of Theology and Philosophy). Also, other bioethicists, and especially medical doctors from non-Catholic environments who share the personalistic view on all aspects of human life, have been included. All in all, the number of involved authors is 60.

The Encyclopaedia includes 115 entries. They are divided into two categories: problem entries and general entries. The first ones point to a technique deployed in biology and medicine carrying with it a moral dilemma. These kinds of entries comprise, for instance, prenatal diagnosis, genetic engineering, cloning, artificial insemination and so on. They are framed within such a scheme: encyclopaedic definition of an entry, historical account showing a development of an issue, medical/clinical description, moral/ethical evaluation, the stance of the Catholic Church concerning a problematic matter, available literature on an issue.

The second category includes general entries. They do not touch explicitly upon a moral content or a moral imperativeness. Nevertheless, they are often present in the background of ethical discussions and debates. As an example it can be pointed to suffering, illness, health, or life. Therefore, such entries are indispensable in bioethics itself. Each of them has been elaborated in a way taking into account their specific character.

The Encyclopaedia aims at a pretty diversified audience, as far as education and medical knowledge are concerned. This assumption prompted the team of contributors to draw up a separate list of basic biological and medical terms. It is attached at the end and it is to be a tool enabling an effective usage of the volume.

The Encyclopaedia was introduced during a one-day conference which took place in Cracow, November 17, 2005. A short look at the event gives an additional clarification of the work itself. The conference was titled: „Three (times) YES: for biology, for ethics, for life”. In the course of that a couple of papers were presented. Rev. Prof. Paweł Bortkiewicz (Poznań University) addressed a topic: „Creating ‘the Culture of Life’ as a One of the Priority Thrusts of a John Paul’s II Teaching”; Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Biesaga (the Pontifical Academy of Theology, Cracow) presented: „Anthropology of a John Paul’s II Encyclical ‘Evangelium vitae’”; Dorota Kornas-Biela, Ph.D. (The Catholic University of Lublin): „Psychology and Pedagogy and a Status of the Prenatal Child”; Rev. Prof. Piotr Morciniec (Opole University): „Limits of Interference in Human Body in the Realm of Transplantation”; Prof. Janusz Andres (Jagiellonian University, Cracow): „Medical and Ethical Problems of Man’s Terminal States”; Rev. Prof. Wojciech Boloż (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw): “Euthanasia in the Context of Human Rights”.

It seems that the title of the conference reflects a central idea of *the Encyclopaedia*. It tries to combine smoothly three indispensable factors of a well-conducted bioethical reflection. First of all, the intention of the editors was to give an honest account of the biological advances giving us new possibilities in biotechnology and in medical practice. It is done in a quite comprehensible way available to all who have at least an average knowledge on biology and medical

sciences. This first facet is, then, associated with a clear-cut ethical approach. The main ethical stance deployed in the volume is a personalistic ethics. It underlines that a human person as a special value must be a starting point and a criterion of discernment of all moral actions. Therefore, the majority of entries draw upon the categories of ethical personalism taken as from philosophy as from the Catholic moral theology. The whole, finally, tends to highlight an importance of the integrally understood human life. Hence, *the Encyclopaedia* aspires to be a clear contribution to building up the culture of life, formulated and so strongly defended by late John Paul II.

The authors of *the Encyclopaedia* are aware that next editions of that must deal with further challenges. It will be essential to broaden the number of entries taking into account new advances in the realm of biomedical sciences. It will also be necessary to invite more philosophers and bioethicists who formally do not belong to the Catholic environment but, nevertheless, share important premises of the personalistic approach and the culture of life. Moreover, it seems that a next edition, preserving a personalistic character, should also move more decisively towards a dialogue with other bioethical positions.

The Encyclopaedia of Bioethics is a useful handbook which can help enormously in dealing with almost everyday doubts concerning biomedical issues which are constantly delivered to us by mass media and often occupy the first pages of newspapers. It is a book for everyone who has a great reverence for a person and his/her life.

Grzegorz HOŁUB

Universal Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Volume VI, Lublin 2005, 980 pages.

The sixth volume of the *Universal Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* [Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii] was published in 2005 by the St. Thomas Aquinas Society in Poland (a section of *Società Internazionale Tommaso d'Aquino*) attached to the Department of Metaphysics at the Catholic University in Lublin. This impressive edition of 980 pages, subsidized by KBN (the State Committee for Scientific Research), contains entries beginning with the letters Kr-Mc.

The *Universal Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* has appeared in Lublin since 2000. It is the first encyclopaedia of philosophy in the history of Polish academic activity and the fifth such publication world-wide. The initiator and continuator of this pioneering enterprise, Fr. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec O.P., is the president of the Academic Committee of the Encyclopaedia and the author of the entries on realistic philosophy. The Committee also includes Professor Abelardo Lobato O.P., Professor Andrzej Maryniarczyk SDB, Editor-in-chief, Professor Piotr Jaroszyński, Professor Henryk Kiereś and Professor Zofia J. Zdybicka USJK.

The aim of the Encyclopaedia is to present the achievements of man's philosophical thought from its origins to the present day, the achievements necessary for the complete development of classic culture, that is science, ethics, art or

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